

[AL] Postponement of the digital switchover deadline and lack of quorum of the media regulator

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On 15 June 2015, the Audiovisual Media Authority (Autoriteti i Mediave Audiovizive - AMA) issued a press release, stating that due to various factors it was impossible for Albania to meet the deadline for the digital switchover. AMA declared that in spite of measures taken to realize the switchover, it was impossible to fully implement the strategy of switching to digital broadcasting and decided to switch off analogue broadcasting until 17 June 2015. AMA declared further, that apart from bearing financial costs the postponement of the deadline and the delays in the digital switchover process also has an influence on the Albanian state's ability to respect international commitments.

In its statement AMA highlighted various parts of the process of the digital switchover that have been slow or halted, leading to delays in the whole process. The regulator specified three particular components of the digital switchover process that are intertwined and affect the whole progress: the digitalization of terrestrial analogue networks of the public broadcaster, of national commercial operators, and of local analogue broadcasters.

More specifically, the regulator particularly referred to the slow digitalization of the two networks of the public broadcaster. After a long court dispute, the company that won the tender for building the digital networks of the public broadcaster Albanian Radio and Television (Radio Televizioni Shqiptar - RTSH) signed the contract with RTSH and the government on March 2015.

In addition, AMA mentioned as a hindering factor the failure of the Parliament to elect the seventh missing member of the regulator. The regulator also referred to the lack of quorum and limited functionality of AMA resulting from two current members' refusal to participate in meetings until the completion of a court process started by the opposition on the election of new members and the chair of AMA. As a result, AMA's ability to make decisions that require a quorum has been limited.

Next to the postponement of the digital switchover deadline, the lack of quorum also affects the regulator's ability to issue network licenses to existing commercial multiplexes that have completed the application process in spring 2015. Although the decision was expected to take place 60 days after the closing of the application deadline, AMA lacks the quorum to make decisions on licenses for

commercial operators. In fact, the latest scheduled meeting of AMA of 31 July 2015 did not take place due to the lack of quorum, the regulator announced. Furthermore, the process of licensing commercial digital networks has been challenged in court by one of the commercial operators, which might lead to further delays in the overall process.

MBI MOSRESPEKTIMIN E AFATEVE TË PROCESIT TË DIGITALIZIMIT

<http://ama.gov.al/preview/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Njoftim-per-median-mbi-afatin-e-digjitalizimit.pdf>

Audiovisual Media Authority's statement on the failure to respect the deadline of the digitalization process

Për mungesë të kuorumit, nuk zhvillohet mbledhja e parashikuar e Bordit Drejtues të AMA-s

<http://ama.gov.al/preview/njoftim-per-media-31-korrik-2015/>

Audiovisual Media Authority's press release of 31 July 2015

